

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom says Iraqi Christians who haven't fled into exile need protection from marauding militias.

Michael Cromartie says Iraq's ancient Christian community has seen its churches burned and believers attacked, threatened and killed. An Assyrian priest was killed last Saturday.

The top U.S commander in Iraq, Army General David Petraeus, told Congress Tuesday that Iraq is still struggling to suppress violence among its own people.

Cromartie notes that unlike the majority Muslims, Iraqi Christians don't have militias to defend themselves, so they must rely instead on Iraq's government and U.S. forces.